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ABSTRACT

This report briefly describes the Marin City, California community and summarizes progress made by the Far West Laboratory's Western Regional Laboratory in the development of a long-range community intervention program. Marin City is a predominantly low-income, black community in which 30 percent of households, mainly those headed by single women, live below the poverty line. Local officials consider substance abuse in the community to be at crisis level. Economic opportunities are limited, and unemployment is chronic and high, especially for teenagers. This report describes technical assistance provided to the community, an ethnographic study of the community, training workshops, and long-range planning and networking with other communities. An appendix provides the planning paper for the Bay Area Early Intervention Program. (RH)

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THE MARIN CITY EARLY INTERVENTION REPORT

December 1988

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INTRODUCTION

During the late 1960s and early 1970s a number of early intervention projects were undertaken (Lazar & Darlington, 1982; Provence & Naylor, 1983; Lally & Honig, 1977; Lally, Mangione & Honig, 1988; Schweinhart & Weikart, 1980) with families from minority populations who were characterized at the time as "disadvantaged." These studies detected two clear trends: 1) children from "disadvantaged" conditions could be helped by early intervention to exhibit fewer signs of failure in school than their controls, and 2) early intervention reduced the incidence and severity of juvenile delinquency when children reached adolescence.

Of equal importance were conclusions reached by the investigators both about the limitations of their interventions and about the critical periods during childhood which additional intervention would have augmented the impact of the children's early experience. Scientists who performed these studies generally agree that: 1) an "innoculation" approach to family support (early intervention followed by a complete cessation of services) had less impact than programs that provided continued supports after the intensive, early phase of the intervention (Zigler & Valentine, 1979); and 2) a small portion of the families served, 10 percent to 20 percent, needed some type of psychotherapy or family counseling above and beyond the social or educational programs conducted (Zigler & Valentine, 1979).

Thus, the study of early intervention, both its positive effects and its shortcomings, suggests the direction that future intervention efforts should go. Bronfenbrenner (1986) summed up what we have learned from past efforts as follows: "Existing theory and research point to the importance for the child's development of the nature and strength of connections existing between the family and the various other settings that a young person enters during the first two decades of life. Of particular significance in this regard are the successive transitions into (and within) daycare, peer group, school and work."

Transitions, by their very nature, are developmental and occur in a social and cultural context. Language development is a case in point. As children become more competent in language and communication they become more socially oriented and skillful. This often happens at a time when they first experience group care, which provides them with manifold

opportunities for structured and unstructured interaction with other children. For minority children, entry into group care may mean encountering children from other cultural groups for the first time or it may mean becoming more socially competent in a culturally homogenous context. Either one of these contexts for making a transition is going to require different adaptations on the part of children.

Because transitions can often affect self perception in a negative way and later educational and social roles, they are particularly important to the development of minority children. For example, Honig, Lally, and Mathieson (1982) found that low-income black children, after spending the first five years of life in an experimental infant and preschool program that emphasized family involvement, dramatically changed in their personal/social behavior after two years in school. The "Social-Emotional Observer Rating of Children" (Emmerich, 1971) was used to observe children in preschool, in kindergarten and again in first grade. As compared to their ratings in preschool and kindergarten, the intervention children exhibited a notable increase in negative behavior toward adults. The children seemed to seek out teachers through many more negative bids than in the past and to smile and laugh less. In contrast, they continued to behave in positive ways toward other children. Only their behavior toward the teacher had changed. Their parents reported to the researchers that their children complained about not learning anything in school.

Honig, Lally, and Mathieson (1982) hypothesized that the expectations of the intervention children for personalized attention from the teacher were being violated, and their behavior changed accordingly. Of equal importance were the data reported by the parents about their own school experiences. None of the parents in this study had graduated from high school, and many had become pregnant while still in school. Many had negative feelings about their school experiences and expressed them openly; they feared that their children would be treated in the same degrading way they reported being treated (Lally & Honig, 1977). The contextual factors of teacher behavior, i.e., not giving personalized attention, and parent perceptions during the transition from preschool to school were thought to influence child behavior adversely in school. Children have been found to be vulnerable to transitions at other points in childhood as well (e.g., Steinberg, 1987).

With the above background in mind, we began preliminary planning of an intervention strategy. We were convinced that the long range success of the intervention would depend in good part on our attending to key developmental transitions throughout childhood. In order to do this, the focus of the intervention could not be confined to early child care settings and the schools. The focus clearly had to be widened to include the family, the home environment and the various community agencies that serve children and families. Because our approach required the close involvement of an entire community and the community's services, input from the community during the development phase of the intervention was considered essential.

During 1988 we undertook preliminary steps to establish collaborative relationships with one low-income community, Marin City, with the aim of developing a long range intervention with children and families. Our initial effort included 1) providing technical assistance in the development of proposals for the enhancement of existing services in the community; 2) exploring the possibility of performing an ethnographic study of the community (the purpose of this activity would be to gain a better understanding of life conditions in the community, as well as the needs and aspirations of its families); 3) conducting a series of training workshops for caregivers who work in the infant and preschool childcare programs serving Marin City; 4) developing a long range intervention strategy in collaboration with service agencies and community leaders in Marin City; and 5) building a network of community service agencies from around the San Francisco Bay Area who share the goal of developing effective community-based intervention strategies with children and families.

This report will briefly describe the Marin City community and summarize progress of the various activities undertaken by Far West Laboratory's Western Regional Laboratory to support the development of a long range intervention program in that community. A synopsis also will be given of the next steps that have evolved from this work.

THE MARIN CITY COMMUNITY

Marin City, California is a predominantly low-income, black community. Its black population, 75 percent of the total population, resides mainly in the poor "Bowl Area"; most of the nonblack residents live in the recently developed Richardson Highlands and Headlands projects. At the time of the 1980 Census, 30 percent of Marin City's residents lived in households whose income stood below the poverty line. Nearly all households below the poverty line are headed by females. Moreover, approximately 60 percent of the households with children in Marin City are headed by single women. Local officials consider substance abuse to be a crisis of major proportions. They are particularly concerned about the long-term effects on children whose mothers used drugs during their pregnancy. At the same time, the economic opportunities are limited and stagnant in Marin City, and unemployment is chronic and high. As in other communities afflicted with chronically high unemployment, teenage unemployment is especially high.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO THE COMMUNITY

Our efforts in Marin City began by establishing collaborative relationships with two key agencies that serve children and families, The Marin City Community Development Corporation and Community Action Marin. Ralph Baker and J. Ronald Lally, of Far West Laboratory, participated in several community organization planning meetings. Two pressing issues identified during those meetings were a lack of funding for the program serving preschool-age children and an inadequate facility for the infant/toddler care program. We made contact with the California State Department of Education to share with them plans for the early intervention project in Marin City. They responded to the idea with enthusiasm and expressed an interest in contributing to the effort. The State ended up inviting Community Action Marin to apply for funding for its preschool program that serves Marin City children, The Marin Learning Center. In addition, Community Action Marin was encouraged by the State to apply

for a portable building to house its infant/toddler program, The Iniece Bailey Infant Center, and indicated that there would be no rental charge for use of the facility. Community Action Marin completed contract proposals, with assistance from the Western Regional Laboratory, both for subsidized funding for their preschool-age program and for a portable building for their infant/toddler program. Both of these proposals were approved by the State Department of Education. Funding for the preschool-age program has already started, and the portable building will be installed for the infant/toddler program at a yet to be specified time.

ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF THE COMMUNITY

A major issue in planning an intervention is the need to create a strategy that is adapted to the community. Ralph Baker, Far West Laboratory's chief liaison to Marin City, attended several meetings in which the unique concerns of the community were discussed. Rather than assuming what the community wants or needs and forging ahead with an early intervention, we wanted to learn from the community. We felt that an essential part of this learning process was to become better informed about the community from its own cultural and social perspective, and that this could be accomplished through ethnographic research. In our discussions with the Marin City Community Development Corporation they became supportive of the idea that an ethnographic study of the community should be completed before full implementation of an early intervention program. In a planning grant proposal to the Marin Community Foundation, they have requested funding to sponsor such a study. Pat Guthrie, an ethnographer on Far West Laboratory's staff, has assisted the Marin City Community Development Corporation with the conceptualization of an ethnographic research strategy. If funded, the study will document the values, socialization goals, relationships and support within Marin City families and the influence of external institutions on the families. This information will be used in designing the intervention, enabling planners to take into consideration the cultural adaptations that parents and growing children make in a specific social and economic context.

TRAINING WORKSHOPS

The Western Regional Educational Laboratory conducted four two-day training workshops for early childhood staff in Marin City, four days for the infant/toddler caregivers at the Iniece Bailey Center and four days for teachers at the Marin Learning Center. The purpose of these workshops was primarily to determine the immediate training needs of staff from those programs and, to tailor the training to address those needs.

The staff training at the Iniece Bailey Center was performed by Sheila Signer, a regular staff member of Far West Laboratory's Center for Child and Family Studies who has collaborated in the development of the "Program for Infant-Toddler Caregivers," a comprehensive training system for infant and toddler caregivers. The "Program" consists of a series of training videos as well as written training materials.

Through conducting the training at the Iniece Bailey Center, we learned that its staff varies tremendously in the amount of formal training and experience they have in infant care. As stated above this Center's facility is inadequate. Because of these two factors, the training that was provided was introductory in nature, and focused to a large extent on how to structure a quality environment for young children. The training approach used a mix of demonstration in the classroom, viewing training videos and group discussion.

The staff at the Iniece Bailey Center responded positively to the training. As a result of the training they have instituted some immediate changes in their program. In order to use the limited space available to them more effectively, they have reorganized it based on information they learned from a video on setting up a safe and interesting environment for infants and toddlers. The video stirred up a lot of discussion among the staff during the training session. Another change they have introduced is that they now keep play materials on child-sized shelving so that the materials are more accessible to the children, which in turn allows them to make choices on their own. The positive effects of these changes have led the staff to seek more information on how to deal with limited space when arranging a childcare environment for infants and toddlers. We have helped them make contact with an expert on infant/toddler

environments and are exploring the possibility of coordinating future training activity with this expert.

The staff and program director at the Iniece Bailey Center expressed that they learned a great deal from the training workshops and that they could benefit from additional training. Our assessment is that their training needs are great and that continued training will must occur in order for this infant/toddler program to become an effective part of a long range intervention effort in Marin City.

The teacher training at the Marin Learning Center was performed by Jean Monroe, a former Far West Laboratory employee who is an expert in the "Responsive Education Program." As a consultant, she regularly leads staff development activities for a variety of agencies that provide services to young children.

Although staff members at the Marin Learning Center have had extensive experience in working with preschool-age children, their background is in recreation and not early childhood education. This meant that the training had to be kept at an elementary level. An additional factor was that many of the children in the program were referred because of behavioral problems in other settings. Thus, many of the questions and concerns raised by the staff were in the area of discipline. The training approach used was a mix of reading short articles, group training exercises, viewing videos and group discussion.

During the training the staff were highly motivated to learn how to work with children more effectively. Three major changes were instituted as a result of the training. In describing the structure of the day, the staff indicated that the children are presented with a series of short activities, with each activity lasting no longer than fifteen minutes. After discussing this practice the staff decided to experiment with fewer activities of longer duration. The purpose of this was to give the children time to adapt to each activity. Another change was to give the children more opportunities for large muscle activity. The training also focused on the way the teachers communicated with the children. The teachers were encouraged to give options to the children both to prevent discipline problems from arising and to resolve conflicts that do arise.

The teachers at the Marin Learning Center expressed a strong desire for additional training. The trainer felt that many important issues were

covered in the training, and several major changes were instituted as a result of the training. In order to sustain the impact of the training, it was recommended that a trainer work directly with the teachers in the classroom over an extended period of time. We are currently exploring the feasibility of doing this so that the Marin Learning Center program can become integrated into a coordinated set of services envisioned for the long range intervention.

LONG RANGE PLANNING AND NETWORKING WITH OTHER COMMUNITIES

Perhaps the most important outcomes of this past year of planning have been in defining an intervention approach and in establishing a network of service agencies concerned with early intervention. Information about both the intervention strategy and the network of agencies has been appended to this report. In Appendix A, The Bay Area Early Intervention Program Consortium Planning Paper, the assumptions underlying the Marin City intervention and the next steps in the planning process are set forth. Far West Laboratory's current and future role in this early intervention program is defined as well.

In the next year several key activities will proceed in Marin City. Additional staff training will occur, criteria for the selection of intervention program families and contrast families for the evaluation will be established, and a plan for securing funding to implement a longitudinal intervention will be formulated. Many of these decisions and plans will be influenced through interchange with other participants in the Bay Area Consortium. At all times, program planners will operate under the dual considerations of 1) the unique life conditions and concerns of Marin City families and children and 2) the benefits of relating the intervention and evaluation activities to other longitudinal intervention efforts in the Bay Area, in the region and across the country.

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APPENDIX A

Bay Area Early Intervention Program Planning Paper

The Bay Area Early Intervention Program is a collaborative activity which joins together the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, the Urban Strategies Council of Oakland Calfornia, the Parent Infant Neighborhood Center of San Francisco, and the Marin City Community Development Corporation. This collaboration was initiated for the purpose of developing comprehensive, long term, community based services to low income families starting at or before pregnancy and continuing into the schools.

Six fundamental assumptions drive the work of the group:

General Assumptions

1) an early intervention program should be designed not as an innoculation but as a first step in a continuing and comprehensive system of supports.

2) early intervention efforts should take place with and through already existing agencies in the community served rather than stand alone, and in addition to individuals and families, service systems should be the focus of the intervention.

3) partnerships with the schools that will eventually serve program children should be established well before children reach the school door.

Assumptions Related to Early Intervention Philosophy

4) for educational and social benefits to be maximized, intervention should be started early, with particular attention paid to the development of the fetus in a drug free and healthy womb.

5) for early intervention to be effective, a personal relationship needs to be established between a member(s) of the early

enrichment team and the families served, particularly the principal caregivers of the program children.

6) a non-judgemental analysis of family strengths coupled with practical attention to family need i.e., nutrition, child care, housing, finances, etc. should be the basis for the individualization of intervention strategies for families.

Far West Laboratory's Role in the Collaboration

Far West Laboratory, through its Center for Child and Family Studies, will facilitate the efforts of the community organizations named above to develop, provide, and evaluate new systems and services for low income families. It is anticipated that each of the three community organizations will develop and shape unique components of the early intervention approach, but will agree on common themes that will be coordinated and facilitated jointly and with the assistance of FWL.

Far West Laboratory will commit a portion of its Western Region Service Center resources for a period of at least 2 years for this purpose.

The activities we are prepared to engage in are:

- design of early intervention initiatives/proposal development
- design of specific intervention activities
- training and technical assistance for the conduct of activities
- research and evaluation of the intervention effort
- local, regional and national networking
- community organization
- development and dissemination of policy and program recommendations

In addition it will be FWL's role to make sure that the latest information on effective early intervention be brought to the attention of the

agencies serving the three collaborating communities and share with others in the field of early intervention the ongoing efforts of the "Bay Area Early Intervention Program." For example, it is anticipated that a research link will be established with the nationally recognized Beethoven Project. It is also anticipated that 1990 data from the 20-year follow-up of the "Family Development Research Program" will be used for comparative purposes.

First Steps 1989

1) FWL will document the already existing early intervention services and systems in the three target communities.

2) FWL will coordinate the collection of information on services and treatment for drug addicted expectant mothers.

3) FWL will coordinate the development of the BAY AREA EARLY INTERVENTION PLAN.

4) FWL will develop and assist in the development of proposals to fund this plan.

5) FWL will provide training in early childhood intervention to agencies and groups specified by the consortium members.

6) FWL will publicize the intervention initiative within the region, with funding agencies, within the early childhood intervention community and with state and local government officials.

7) FWL will develop a network of "concerned educators" within the region who will be kept informed of the programs progress and enlisted as advisors.

Long-Range Plan

The Bay Area Early Intervention Program Consortium will develop a model program for the delivery of comprehensive services to low-income families. It will devise systems and strategies for analyzing and

supplementing the services of agencies and institutions already serving that population. This agency intervention process will take place starting at the prenatal period and move through infancy, preschool and into the early school years. Activities will take place at every point in a child's journey from infancy to third grade, with particular attention paid to the developmental transitions that take place as the child moves through life. The anticipated intervention strategy will directly focus on a selected number of program families and their contrasts in each of the three communities in the consortium, and those agencies and institutions that will serve them. Work with agencies and institutions will commence before program families arrive at their doorstep. Intervention efforts will prepare those agencies and institutions for service to the program families. Training, technical assistance, and organizational development help will be provided. The goal of this approach is to strengthen and supplement those services before and during the time program families receive service, and to alter the agencies' service approach from that point forward toward similar families who seek service.

Emphasis will be placed on the documentation of the efforts of the consortium to transform and orchestrate these services so that the program can be duplicated at other sites. Documentation and evaluation of these efforts are seen as an integral part of the intervention. Another important component of the program's work will be the development of a networking system with interested members of the health, education, and social service community. This will be done locally, within the Western Region and nationally. This will ensure input from and dissemination to others interested in service to low-income populations. It is expected that the networking activity will eventually result in training, technical assistance, design, and development work with organizations and agencies outside of the Bay Area.